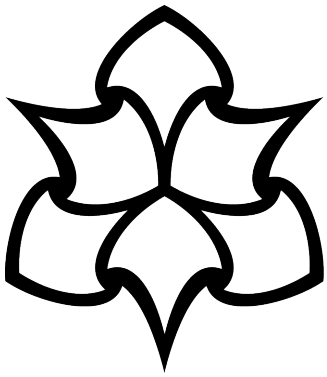

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THE POLITICS OF TOPONYMIC CONTINUITY: THE LIMITS OF CHANGE AND THE ONGOING LIVES OF STREET NAMES

Duncan Light and Craig Young

Introduction

This chapter argues that critical toponymies of the politics of street naming can be advanced by considering the understudied area of instances where the toponymic landscape exhibits *continuities* of names associated with previous political regimes. It is now well established in the literature that changes in the toponymic landscape are often closely linked to regime change. In such cases the literature has convincingly demonstrated how the landscape of street names was changed as part of the new regime's desire to signify its agenda in the urban landscape. However, in this chapter we argue that this focus has neglected cases in which there is a significant *lack* of change, where ideologically-charged street names from previous regimes have persisted, and that there is often an unexplored politics to the limits of change. We use a range of illustrative examples, predominantly focused on our area of expertise in post-socialist changes.

The chapter explores the different processes underlying these continuities, arguing that the literature has too readily conceptualised toponymic revision during regime change as thorough, effective and rapid. Instead, by considering a range of 'left-over' toponymic landscapes - caused by the lack of comprehensiveness of change, the (lack of) actions by urban actors and the reactions of urban populations (ranging from opposition to apathy to habit) – we argue that there is an important politics of continuity which critical toponymies needs to address. The process of political-inspired toponymic change needs to be seen as less comprehensive and rapid, and more incoherent, inconclusive, messy, spatially-diverse, long-term and influenced by rather less systematic and co-ordinated actions on the part of key urban actors than has previously been considered. We conclude by sketching out a research agenda for this 'politics of toponymic continuity'.

The Limits of Political Change and the Renaming of the Urban Landscape

One of the tenets of critical place name studies is that urban toponyms are embedded within broader structures of power, authority and ideology (Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009). Place

naming is thus one component of broader political projects concerned with governmentality, state formation and nation-building (Rose Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010). Urban toponyms act to reify a particular set of political values in the urban landscape and in this way they "are instrumental in substantiating the ruling socio-political order and its particular 'theory of the world' in the cityscape" (Azaryahu 1996, 312). Furthermore, since urban place names are produced in particular political contexts they are vulnerable to changes in the political order (Azaryahu 1996, 2009) which bring to power new regimes with different sets of political values and aspirations, with the result that names attributed by the former order may become discordant with the new agenda. For this reason, renaming the urban landscape is one of the most familiar acts (or rituals) accompanying revolutionary political change.

This process of "toponymic cleansing" (Rose Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010, 460) constitutes an unambiguous and public statement about the demise of the former regime (Azaryahu 2009, 2012a). Renaming streets is part of 'landscape cleansing' (Czepczyński 2008) through which the official public landscape of the old regime is unmade and replaced by acts of "symbolic retribution" (Azaryahu 2011, 29), such as pulling down statues. Since shifts in political order produce a reconfiguring of the 'known past' (Verdery and Kligman 2011), the new names attributed to streets and landmarks introduce a new political agenda into the cityscape and, in theory, into the practices of everyday life (Azaryahu 2009; Rose Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010). Such renaming draws a clear boundary between a particular past and aspirations for a new future (Marin 2012). This renaming following political change is well established as a central focus of the critical toponymies literature (Azaryahu 2012a) in contexts such as post-socialism (Azaryahu 1997, 2012a; Drozdzewski 2014; Gil 2005; Light 2004; Marin 2012; Palonen 2008), the post-colonial (Nash 1999; Whelan 2003; Yeoh 1996), and post-Apartheid (Guyot and Seethal 2007; Swart 2008).

However, the effectiveness of (re-)naming urban places as a strategy for introducing the ideology of the ruling order into the spaces of everyday life is rarely questioned by regimes and little explored in academic analyses. What is missing from this literature is a consideration of the *limits* of renaming, both in terms of its thoroughness and its political effectiveness and ability to reshape identities and everyday lives. To begin to engage with this critical point there are a number of assumptions underpinning the notion of toponymic cleansing which could profitably be opened up to further academic scrutiny.

First, renaming is often portrayed as quick to implement and immediate in its impact (Azaryahu 2009). It is the rapidity of renaming the urban landscape that makes it popular among political elites as a way of marking their presence, particularly since other changes – such as political and economic restructuring - may take years to have an impact. However, it is worth questioning whether the renaming of the urban landscape is always as immediate and thorough as is often supposed (and see Azaryahu 2012a, 2012b; Rose-Redwood 2008; Shoval 2013). Perhaps the literature has been overly focused on spectacular examples of rapid change in tumultuous contexts which may not be the norm? The literature lacks consideration of examples where renaming processes are drawn out over time or which are typified by continuity rather than change.

Second, renaming streets is often assumed to be uncomplicated since the incoming order will usually have control of the administrative apparatus. Moreover, it is easier to rename streets than to remove statues, monuments and buildings. However, there is a danger here

in portraying the implementation of street name change as straightforward and simply the result of 'top-down' planning reflecting the ideas of a political elite. It is well known that urban administrations are complex, often typified by political in-fighting and poor communication between departments, and subject to a degree of incompetence in their actions. Could variations in change and continuity be explained by the particular politics of localities and conflicts between different parts of the state and urban administrations? How does local political opposition impact on apparently straightforward renaming processes? And, at a more mundane level, we know almost nothing about how the actions of those whose management and labour are significant in processes of street name change or continuity. Someone has to manage the practical aspects of changing street signs and someone has to go out and physically do it, but we lack knowledge of how their practices affect renaming.

Third, renaming is assumed to be relatively inexpensive. The material signage of the former regime can be quickly removed and replaced by temporary signage. However, the production of entirely new signage for multiple streets throughout a city can, in fact, be a surprisingly significant item of public expenditure. While it may seem small as a proportion of urban budgets it could well become a political issue where politicians and the public perceive it to be a low priority compared to other more pressing issues at a time of political and economic upheaval. In addition, little is known about the impact on street name change of other financial and practical implications ie. the concerns of residents in renamed streets who have to change their addresses and documents.

Fourth, the renaming of the urban landscape following radical political change is assumed to be comprehensive. Indeed, it could be argued (though this is little explored) that the process of renaming needs to be comprehensive if it is to be meaningful and effective. However, this notion of the comprehensiveness of change could be challenged. For example, is there an intra-urban geography to this, with city cores and high-profile streets subject to renaming while the suburbs are sites of continuity? And are the more thorough and high profile examples of toponymic cleansing more typical of capital cities which new regimes use to project their identities internationally, thus obscuring other outcomes further down the urban hierarchy? It would be reasonable to expect a more complex geography of renaming and continuity, particularly given the issues of expense and competing political priorities discussed above, in which the renaming process is less coherent and conclusive than is often thought.

Fifthly, renaming urban places is assumed to be effective in introducing new names into the fabric of everyday life and into popular consciousness. There is an unspoken assumption that, if new names are introduced, they will automatically be embraced by the urban populace and adopted for everyday use. However, what if the attempts by incoming regimes to change urban toponyms founder on the unwillingness of urban residents to take them up in their popular imaginations and everyday practices? The issue of how urban populations respond to attempts to impose a new toponymic landscape and accompanying sets of meanings remains a major gap in the street names literature.

In short, while we would not deny the importance of toponymic cleansing, the renaming of the urban landscape following revolutionary political change has tended to be portrayed as an unproblematic and linear process which is quick, clean, decisive and effective. This assumption is held by political elites and has also received little critical attention in academic

studies. Therefore, to open up an agenda focusing on the politics of continuity in the toponymic landscape and the limits to renaming we explore three broad themes: the limits of the political process of renaming; the effects of the actions of urban actors responsible for implementing the renaming of streets; and the responses of the urban populace.

Street renaming and the limits of 'top-down' political power

In this first section we examine instances where a new regime has the ability to rename the urban landscape but does not see this process through to completion. There are a range of reasons why this can happen. In some cases political change may not be accompanied by a desire to erase the symbolic traces of the former order. The new regime may have a complex relationship to its predecessor, rather than simply being hostile to it, and there may be limited concern to mark a decisive break with the past. Indeed the political regime itself may exhibit continuity. Such a position will be apparent in the policy towards renaming the urban landscape in order to erase the agenda and priorities of the former regime.

One such example is post-Soviet Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-91, Russia sought to dismantle the structures of state socialism (single-party rule and a command economy) and replace them with democratic rule and a market economy. However, Gill (2005) argues that many post-communist politicians had deep roots in the power structures of the Soviet regime and were not motivated by a burning desire to disavow the Soviet past (see also Forest and Johnson 2002). For this reason, there was less concern to erase the symbolic urban landscape created by Communism with the result that many Soviet-era street names remained unchanged. For example, in Moscow many streets named after leading communist revolutionaries and Soviet politicians retained their names such as 'Lenin Street' or 'Red Army Street' (*ibid*). Similarly, in St. Petersburg streets named after key events in communist historiography and the institutions of the socialist state have kept their original names (Marin 2012) such as 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat Square', 'Communist Youth Street' or 'Lenin Square' **[Figure 1?]**, while the *Oblast* which surrounds the city has retained the name of 'Leningrad'.

In the city of Minsk (Belarus) there is considerable continuity in Soviet-era street names. Between 1990-93 only 14 streets and one square were renamed, because early in the 1990s former Soviet nomenklatura gained positions in the new urban administration and opposed proposals to return streets to their pre-1917 names (Bylina 2013). Although pressure from political groups such as the Belarusian Peoples Front on the City Council had achieved some changes, this ended in 1994 when Alexander Lukashenka came to power and forged strong links with the Russian Federation. Interestingly, the limited street name changes that did occur in the early 2000s – such as Francysk Skaryna Avenue becoming Praspekt Nezelazhnasci (Independence Avenue) and Masherov Avenue changing to Praspekt Peramozhcau (Victors Avenue) – were linked to attempts to cement Russian-oriented myths about what Russians call the 'Great Patriotic War' (the Second World War) in the Minsk landscape and Belorussian identity (Bylina 2013). Here a realignment of state politics to ally with the Russian Federation which, as noted above, itself had not pursued an aggressive renaming strategy underpinned the strong continuity of Soviet-era street names in Belarus. These two examples thus illustrate the limits of renaming as related to political continuity and a lack of political will for change despite apparent regime change.

The limits to state power and the resulting lack of comprehensive renaming are also evident in the case of streets in Romania named after Vasile Roaita during the socialist era (1947-89). Romania's socialist regime lauded Roaita as a teenage proletarian hero who was shot by the police during a strike in Bucharest's railway yards in 1933. Consequently, streets, schools, collective farms and a seaside resort were named after him: in 1954 there were 9 such streets in Bucharest alone (Light, Nicolae and Suditu 2002). However, this celebration of Roaita changed after Nicolae Ceauşescu assumed power in 1965. As he became the focus of an extravagant personality cult, Ceauşescu was presented as the foremost young activist in Romanian communism. Hence, Roaita swiftly fell from favour and was airbrushed from the historical narrative (Boia 2002). The streets in Bucharest named after him had their names changed and by 1973 only one remained (located right on the very edge of the city). This was renamed in 1990 after the fall of Ceauşescu's regime.

Yet, in Voluntari and Jilava, two settlements just outside Bucharest, and in two villages in Transylvania, there are streets which have retained the name of Vasile Roaita. All survived the decommemoration of Roaita after Ceauşescu's rise to power and the fall of the communist regime. Moreover, in Voluntari there are a number of other streets which continue to commemorate minor Romanian communist activists. The continued commemoration of Roaita is not an isolated case. For example, there are five streets in Romania named '23 August' **[Figure 2?]**, a hallowed date in communist historiography which commemorates the 1944 overthrow of Romania's pro-Axis leader, an event for which the communist regime claimed the credit.

Why have these streets have retained their names, despite a decree-law of March 1990 which called for the change of names which were no longer in concordance with Romania's new political aspirations? Ilfov County, in which both Voluntari and Jilava are situated, has long been a stronghold of the Social Democratic Party (Gallagher 2005), a party that, in the post-socialist period, has been favoured by former members of the Romanian Communist Party. Local politicians in Voluntari and Jilava would hold a more favourable view of Romania's communist past and probably did not think it important enough to change a street name in order to decommemorate Vasile Roaita.

The significance of the case of Vasile Roaita is that it illustrates the limits of state-level political authorities to enforce changes to streets and other urban landmarks. Even where is an 'official' policy on which names are (or are not) ideologically appropriate, there is no certainty that such a policy will be uniformly applied throughout the country. As Verdery (1991, 84) argues: "Policies may be *made* at the center, but they are *implemented* in local settings, where those entrusted with them may ignore, corrupt, overexecute, or otherwise adulterate them". This probably explains why four streets in Romania still carry Roaita's name. The local administrators responsible for decommemorating Roaita neglected to do so, or did not consider it important or urgent, or even wished to retain the name.

In other cases, a new political order may have the political will but lack the material or financial resources to implement their policies. Renaming streets is by no means as cheap as is sometimes assumed. A single new street name sign may not in itself be expensive but if multiple signs are needed for an individual street (and multiple streets are to be renamed) the costs quickly mount. Furthermore, following a change in political order, the new regime

usually has other more urgent financial commitments, so affixing new name plates can quickly cease to be a priority. In other words, the renaming of streets may be an early declarative and rhetoric act by an incoming regime, but the actual complete implementation of those changes may be much less important (and can be delegated to lower levels of government who in turn may not carry it out).

In post-socialist Bucharest, for example, there are over 4000 streets (many of which had names which reflecting state socialism), but less than 300 were renamed in the 1990s (Light 2004). Other studies of street renaming in post-socialist capitals have recorded similar figures (eg. Azaryahu 1997; Gill 2005; Palonen 2008; Marin 2012). Moreover, in Bucharest the majority of renamings took place in the central part of the city: almost two-thirds of renamed streets were within 4km of the city centre (Light 2004), with similar findings reported in Moscow (Gill 2005).

Although it had the opportunity to comprehensively reconfigure Bucharest's toponymic landscape, the City Hall opted for a more restrained approach which concentrated on the most ideologically charged names and on the city centre. No doubt City Hall was well aware of the costs involved in a more comprehensive purging of socialist-era street names. In 2000 individual new name plates cost US$4 (Anon 2000). Individually such a sum is trivial, but if applied to a comprehensive renaming throughout the city the costs could quickly become a major burden for the city. Furthermore, the City Hall had other priorities, such as renewing the city's infrastructure and assuring the provision of services. Consequently, the street renaming process quickly ran out of steam and many streets outside the city centre retain names with distinctly socialist resonances, eg. 'Street of the Worker', 'Street of Concrete', 'Street of Reconstruction' and 'Road of the Cooperative Farm' (for other examples see Azaryahu 1997; Gill 2005; Marin 2012). Again, the ability of regimes to implement comprehensive change in the toponymic landscape can be limited, and may founder on various practicalities. Indeed, regimes may actually play a strategic game and focus on the centres of capital cities.

Finally, elites with the power of renaming are not homogeneous. A variety of state institutions and political elites (Forest and Johnson 2002; Forest, Johnson and Till 2004) may have different (or even competing) agendas regarding renaming. For example, many of Bucharest's metro stations were originally given names reflecting the ideological agenda of the socialist state and many of these survived the changes of 1989, such as 'Square of Work', 'New Times', 'Peace', '1 May', and (until 2009) 'Peoples' Army'. Although allocated in a particular ideological context, these names are sufficiently ambiguous and can be reinterpreted in a way appropriate for a post-communist state. Here another key elite actor – the private company that owns the metro and its infrastructure – has taken a different approach to renaming from that of the state. Again, states and urban authorities are not all powerful and continuities in naming may reflect the actions of other influential actors.

The examples above point to the limits of the political process of renaming streets after revolutionary political change. In many instances (and particularly in post-socialist contexts), such renaming is not comprehensive, driven by an ideological imperative to purge the urban landscape of the symbols of the former regime. Instead, the process is more pragmatic and considered and the emphasis is on changing particular names (those that are most ideologically inappropriate) in particular places (the city centre). The result is what we could

call ‘leftover’ or ‘residual’ toponymies: street names allocated by the former regime which in some way reflect the values and agenda of that regime. More research is required to explore to what extent there is a consistent geography to such leftover toponymies - for example, are they predominantly found in the more peripheral parts of the city? That the new regime is prepared for such street names to remain ‘in place’ indicates that the use of toponyms as proclamative ideological statements may be less powerful than is assumed.

Street renaming and the actions of lower-level urban actors

While we have identified above how elites with the political power to rename the urban landscape can fail to see the process through to completion, we know practically nothing about the role played by a range of lower-level actors and agents in the city who can, willfully or unintentionally, subvert the attempts of political elites to introduce new place names. The role of such actors in implementing political decisions about changing street names has been almost completely overlooked in the critical toponymy literature. This suggests a need to focus on the everyday mundane governance of street renaming and the labour required to achieve it, both of which can play a role in the limits of renaming.

For urban managers to implement top-down policies of street renaming requires the allocation of resources for the production of new signage, plus the labour costs of installing it. Following a period of political change, the allocation of funding may be uncertain (or reduced). Furthermore, urban managers may have more urgent priorities in adjusting to the demands of the incoming political order. Consequently, in balancing financial priorities urban managers may decide that they cannot immediately afford the costs of producing new signage in order to implement street name changes and so may elect to delay the process until appropriate resources are available. They may even ignore central directives about renaming streets in order to focus on more pressing issues.

In post-socialist Bucharest, well over a decade after the collapse of Ceauşescu’s regime there were many streets which retained their socialist names and signage, even though they had been officially renamed in the early 1990s. This can only have caused confusion for the people who lived their who were now uncertain of their exact address. It also meant that taking a taxi to some parts of the city necessitated using a communist-era street name, and such a simple performative utterance destabilises official efforts to rename the urban landscape (see Kearns and Berg 2002). This delay in introducing new signage into the urban environment can be found in a range of other contexts. For example, both Azaryahu (2012c) and Shoval (2013) report that the process of affixing new signage to streets in Israeli cities lagged some time behind the political decision to change the names.

Another important group of urban actors is those responsible for making the new signage. In the context of a broader confusion about the changing names of streets they may misunderstand their instructions or, alternatively, they may simply be bad at their job. This appears to be the only explanation for cases in central Bucharest where new signage was produced and affixed to buildings which still displayed the communist-era name. For example, *Strada Măndineşti* in the historic centre of the city was renamed *Strada Sf. Dimitru* (after a nearby church) in 1993 but signage installed in the 1990s listed its original name with the ‘changed’ name in brackets. **[Figure 3?]**

An equally important group of actors are the workers who are responsible for putting new signs up. The actions of this group play a vital role in implementing broader political decisions about renaming streets: they are responsible for literally putting the new names 'in place'. However, they can also thwart the process in a variety of ways. For example, in Bucharest there are many instances where new signs were installed but the original socialist-era signage containing the original names was left (undamaged) in place. Such leftover materialities present a curious and unresolved form of parallel toponymy which causes confusion for urban residents and which conspicuously fails to declare the demise of the former regime. One of the best examples was 'Boulevard of the Republic' (named in the first months of the socialist regime) which returned to its pre-WW2 name of 'Queen Elizabeth Boulevard' in 1995. Yet socialist-era name plates remained in place on the boulevard throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s and one survived until late 2006 (when it was removed during the preparations for Romania's accession to the European Union). In more peripheral parts of the city similar examples can still be found. Nor is this situation unique to the capital city. For example, a cluster of similar examples can be found in the western city of Timişoara (birthplace of the 1989 Romanian revolution). **[Figure 4?]**

Why do city workers neglect something as simple as removing the old signage? It may be that the old signage is physically difficult to remove due to the way that it is fixed to buildings and, if they were not given explicit instructions to do so, workers simply didn't bother. The ideological fervour which drives state-led, top-down renaming strategies may mean little to workers who have to actually physically implement changes, some of whom may assume that it might be more practical to retain the old names and signs. Indeed, by the time the new names had been chosen and were ready to be installed many of the workers were probably entirely indifferent to the remnants of the socialist era which remained in the city. Here the mundane practices and attitudes of city workers and the materiality of the old signage combine to underpin the persistence of toponymies in the urban landscape. The materiality and 'agency' of old nameplates can thus also play a role in the limits of top-down political renaming projects.

Similar processes can also be observed in the post-colonial context of Malta. Following independence from the United Kingdom in 1964 and the declaration of the Republic in 1979, Malta set about creating a new Maltese national identity. This included changing street names that had been allocated by the British colonial authorities and a shift from English to Malti as the dominant language of new street names (although bilingual names with Malti first are used in tourist areas). But again, those workers charged with affixing the new signage in Malti did not apparently think it important to remove the traces of colonial era names. **[Figure 5?]** As a result traces of the toponymy of the colonial regime can still be found throughout Malta and Gozo. Another example can be seen in Tbilisi, Georgia, where new street names particularly in central and tourist areas are bilingual in Georgian and English and have replaced older street name signs in Russian. However, not far from the city centre there are numerous surviving Soviet-era signs in Georgian and Russian even on renovated buildings. In some cases workmen have simply sprayed pebble-dash over the Russian language sign rather than taking it down, leaving a ghostly remnant of the previous regime. [Figure 6-7?]

In the case of post-socialist Bucharest the managers of apartment blocks represent another group of urban actors who operate independently from the city authorities responsible for street naming and whose actions undermined the process. In Bucharest, the address of the block is painted above each entrance and many blocks display small metal plates indicating particular entrances and the apartments which can be accessed from them. If a street changed its name in the post-socialist period then it was the role of each block manager to change the signage. However, many block managers (who have found their role less important in the post-socialist period) were slow to do this or never bothered at all. They may have lacked funds to have the address repainted; they may have been unwilling to change a name to which they and the residents were accustomed; they may not have thought it important; or they may have simply forgotten about it. The outcome is that socialist-era names can still be found on blocks, even if the street signage displays the correct name. **[Figure 6?]**

The sometimes conflicting actions of city governments and the committees responsible for implementing changes in street names can also play a role here. In Minsk, Lenin Square was renamed Independence Square in 1992, as was the nearby metro station. However, the toponymic cleansing was far from thorough as the name Lenin Square remained on signs within the metro system (in addition to a surviving monument of Lenin) (Bylina 2013). However, in 2003 the city authorities returned Independence Square to Lenin Square. Public protest brought forth a proposal by the city Executive Committee to reinstate 'Independence Square', but this was never carried out as that organisation cited public protest against going back to Independence Square. Thus the Soviet-era toponym Lenin Square has reappeared and persists due to political disagreements within the city authority.

The toponymic traces of a former regime can thus survive for a wide variety of reasons, including a lack of resources or political will to replace them; misunderstanding of what changes are to be implemented; an unwillingness among workers to do any more than instructed; laziness; a lack of interest in the renaming of streets; or simply a failure to recognise it as important. A political decision to change a street name does not necessarily mean that the name will be changed (or at least not immediately) or that the material signage which marked the former name will be removed. These examples illustrate how the projects of political elites can be compromised through the mundane actions of a wider range of lower-level urban actors (both within and outside the administrative apparatus of the local state). For these reasons top-down projects to rename the urban landscape can be much less immediate, visible and effective than is sometimes supposed. Again, this points to the limits of the process of renaming the urban landscape after a period of political change.

Everyday Popular Responses to Street Name Changes

Although there has been considerable academic interest in the renaming of streets following political change most researchers have focused on the top-down, political-administrative process of renaming. However, the responses of the urban population to such renamings have received only scant attention. Indeed, the wider issue of how people use urban place names is an area where more research is required (Azaryahu 2011; Light and Young 2014). As we argued earlier, among political elites (and some academic analysis) there is an unstated assumption that renaming the urban landscape for political ends will be *effective*: it

is taken for granted that new names will be embraced by the inhabitants of the city and will be quickly absorbed into everyday life. However, street name changes do not necessarily enjoy popular acceptance and can be contested or resisted (Azaryahu 1996; Kearns and Berg 2002; Alderman 2008; Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010; Alderman and Inwood 2013; Light and Young 2014) and new names attributed to the urban landscape can fail to gain widespread popular acceptance (de Soto 1996; Myers 1996; Rose-Redwood 2008; Marin 2012; Shoval 2013; Light and Young 2014).

Urban residents can oppose street name changes for a number of reasons. They may feel an attachment to the old name and this can be especially important following radical political change when residents may look for the reassurance offered by the familiar (Gill 2005). Here it is important to acknowledge that ideologically imposed street names may undergo a process of "semantic displacement" (Azaryahu 1996, 321) through which the name becomes detached from the person or event which it commemorates. To the inhabitants of the city a name may be understood as just a name (rather than a proclamative ideological statement). Indeed, many urban dwellers may not even know the significance of what or who is remembered by a street name but still form mundane attachments to it as the place where they live or socialise. Therefore, they may be unsympathetic to top-down attempts to change it.

Alternatively, residents may contest a new name because they do not identify with who or what is commemorated by it. While the incoming regime may seek to impose a new hegemonic narrative of national history, not everyone in the population will necessarily agree with the choice of new names. Furthermore, residents may distrust the motives behind the attribution of a new name. A further reason why residents may oppose street renamings is for the personal inconvenience it causes them. To understand this we only have to think of the number of people, institutions and organisations that we need to inform if we move house and change our address. Changing the name of a street places a burden on the residents of that street to change their identity papers, and inform employers, banks, utility companies and friends of their new address. This all involves time and expense and for this reason renamings can be unpopular (particularly if there is a delay between a political change and the subsequent changing of street names).

The actual practices (or 'tactics' following De Certeau (1984)) of resistance to a new toponym that has been imposed by political elites can take two forms. First, citizens can simply refuse to use a newly allocated name (Yeoh 1992; Myers 1996; Shoval 2013). For example, in Bucharest in 1997 the Christian Democratic National Peasant Party, which controlled the City Hall, elected to change the name of '1 May Boulevard' to 'Ion Mihalache Boulevard' (a pre-WW2 politician who was a member of the party). This renaming was deeply unpopular with many in the city who argued that 1 May represented an international day of worker's solidarity that did not have exclusively socialist associations. The renaming was also interpreted as a rather clumsy attempt by the ruling party to foreground one of its 'own' people (Light and Young 2014). Consequently, many Bucharesters deliberately do not use the 'official' name, (preferring to continue to use '1 May Boulevard') and a group of residents of the boulevard submitted a formal request for it to return to its original name (Anon 2002). Shops and businesses located on the boulevard frequently use both names in their publicity in acknowledgement that there are many who do not know the boulevard by its

official name. Thus toponyms can continue in everyday practice even if officially removed, further illustrating the limits of renaming practices.

A second way to oppose a change of street name is to seek to intervene in the administrative process, either to prevent a new name being attributed, or to seek to reverse a previous renaming. The rationale for this is often a mixture of the ideologically-laden nature of street names with more mundane and prosaic considerations, such as confusion among urban residents, concerns with the cost and inconvenience associated with having the street where you live renamed, or popular attachment to names. In Moscow in the early 1990s, for example, the Presidium of Moscow City Council began a renaming process during which it changed about 70 street names. However, public opposition to this process grew, particularly linked to the confusion caused to day-to-day life by the renamings, with the result that the City Council halted the renaming process, ensuring the survival of names which were due for removal (Vakhrusheva 1993). In one particular case, that of renaming Ulitsa Pushkinskaya to Bolshaya Dmitrovka, Muscovites opposed renaming on grounds of the cost to local government at a time when it had other priorities and the fact that Pushkin's name was strongly associated in their minds with that location.

A further example from Moscow illustrating this complex mix of political opposition and more mundane considerations is that of what is now Alexander Solzhenitsyn Street, which was renamed in 2008 from Bolshaya Kommunistecheskaya Ulitsa ('Big Communist Street') (Harding 2008). This change of name was the subject of political opposition by the communist Left Front youth organisation who mounted a legal challenge. However, residents also opposed the change because of the cost and inconvenience of altering essential documents. Here Muscovites signed a petition in their 100s and residents of the street took more direct action, physically tearing street signs from buildings (Harding 2008). In the Siberian city of Irkutsk architects and historians petitioned the city to halt renaming proposals on the grounds of protecting the historical value represented by the toponymic landscape and fears that residents would become confused (Goble 2013). However, counter-examples can be found. Bylina (2013), for example, reports that the public, mass media and intellectuals in Minsk express discomfort with the continuity of Soviet-era street names in the post-Soviet period, illustrating that public responses to renaming processes will be highly varied in different contexts.

However, again it is possible to expand the terms of the debate here by recognising that the use of old toponyms can persist even when officially and materially they have been changed, simply because of everyday practices and habit. Geographers, and those studying the politics of toponymic change, have perhaps been too keen to focus on resistance. While the contestation of new street names is important we also have to recognise that it is not the only popular process which subverts the imposition of the new names. We also need to consider a range of unreflexive practices and habits among urban residents that are often overlooked (though see De Soto 1996; Rose-Redwood 2008; Light and Young 2014). Elsewhere, for example, (Light and Young 2014) we consider the case of Moghioroș Market in Bucharest, a Communist-era toponym (Alexandru Moghioroș (1911-69) was a senior member of the Romanian Communist Party). After 1989 the Romanian state changed its name to Drumul Taberei, reflecting the name of the neighbourhood in which it is located. However, the name Moghioroș remains in daily use, sometimes instead of the new name and sometimes in parallel to it. The name is largely devoid of its original meaning (few

people remember who it commemorates) but people use it because they always have done or they hear others use it, not because they are resisting the de-Communisation strategies of the post-socialist Romanian state. Businesses also use the old name so that people understand where they are located. In this case it is simply mundane, habitual practices that keep the old toponym in current use.

This section has explored a further little understood aspect of the politics of toponymic continuity and the limits to political power when it comes to renaming strategies, namely public responses to renaming. For a variety of reasons, reflecting a complex mix of the political and the practical, residents may actively oppose renamings, seek to reverse them or then chose to ignore official renaming practices. This can be political but it can also be out of habit or even apathy. These points also raise the question of to what extent do people in their everyday lives pay attention to or connect with street names and changes? Publics may not share the importance attached by political elites to new names which highlights the performative limits of street names as political statements.

Conclusions

The study of toponymic cleansing has rightly established itself as a prominent and popular theme within the critical toponymy literature. Such studies will continue to be important, not least because they reveal the significant role of street renaming in the interplay between ideology, power, identity, urban governance and landscape change. However, in this chapter we have argued that critical toponymic studies should go beyond examining the issue of street renaming as part of regime change to also consider the 'politics of toponymic continuity'. To conclude this chapter we identify 3 areas which we consider central to opening up this research agenda.

First, far more studies could be undertaken of continuities in ideologically-charged toponyms from the scale of individual streets to the toponymic landscape of entire cities. Previous studies have tended to focus on which streets are renamed and why, but more investigation is required of why some streets do not get renamed. This is not so much about a quantitative evaluation of how many streets are not renamed – after all, it is unrealistic to think that an urban administration would seek to change all street names – but about the politics of which are deemed to not require eradication. Such a choice is value-laden and inherently political and may involve retaining (or ignoring) streets which may from external perspectives seem ripe for renaming. However, historical figures and events are ambiguous and are always socio-politically constructed, so while it might be obvious to think that a new regime would want to remove them it may be considerably less straightforward than that and people can have all kinds of complex relationships to names. The politics of such relationships and choices – by states, urban authorities and urban populations – require much more thorough investigation. This needs to be done in the context of carrying out more nuanced analyses of the comprehensiveness of renaming which considers the more complex geographies of renaming and continuity as part of the same process. The issue of geographical complexity in the thoroughness of renaming, from the intra-urban scale to looking across the urban hierarchy outside of capital cities, requires much more consideration, and such studies could also be more sensitive to any temporal dynamics.

Second, a focus on the politics of continuity also demands more of an appreciation of both the messy politics of renaming and the potentially incoherent strategizing and implementation that follows. Previous studies have perhaps tended to draw too neat a link between regime change and street renaming, implying a straightforward political process. However, what about political tensions and in-fighting, not just between political viewpoints and parties, but within urban administrations or between state- and urban-scale administrations? And further down the line, what is really lacking is understanding of how lower-level actors within and outside of urban administrations influence this process – committees, urban managers, block managers, work units and workers and their managers. Does the fate of particular street names rest on mundane decisions around budgets and resources or the attitudes of the workers detailed to actually take down old nameplates and put up new ones?

And lastly, third, a major research lacunae is the ways in which various publics form different relationships to street names, beginning with the question of whether street names and changes actually do resonate in any ways with people's everyday lives. The assumption that changing the toponymic landscape actually has any impact on citizens of cities or nations requires much more critical investigation. Clearly in some places people do react to change, but does this necessarily constitute political opposition, or is it informed by much more mundane and prosaic considerations like cost and inconvenience? Alternatively, are people happy to continue living with street names which incoming regimes might be quick to deem as misaligned with their political ideologies because residents have developed long-term personal and even emotional relationships with those names? Engaging with the issue of residents' emotional and everyday lived geographies of street names and how they impact upon continuity and change is a major challenge for our proposed 'politics of toponymic continuity', which itself suggests a new direction for critical toponymies.

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